

February 2006

## Technology Left Behind -- What in the WorldCat is OCLC up to?

Cris Ferguson

*Furman University*, [cferguson13@murraystate.edu](mailto:cferguson13@murraystate.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg>



Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Ferguson, Cris (2006) "Technology Left Behind -- What in the WorldCat is OCLC up to?," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 18: Iss. 1, Article 33.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.4862>

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact [epubs@purdue.edu](mailto:epubs@purdue.edu) for additional information.

## NISO Metasearch Initiative from page 81


- Many different search and retrieval protocols are in use, with many providers supporting more than one access method. These include: HTTP/HTML based (76%); Z39.50 (64%); XML/SOAP (33%); SQL (30%); and legacy system and/or Telnet-based access (25%).
- The most common format for display of search results was as an HTML page (84%), followed by MARC 21 (63%), proprietary XML (53%), Dublin Core (26%), and GRS-1 (21%). Although RSS and WSDL (Web Services Description Language) are not used by most survey respondents today, 20% indicated plans for future support.

- Respondents cited several benefits for allowing customers metasearch access: an increased customer base (79%), gaining a competitive edge (58%), and opportunities for partnership (53%).
- The main concerns of content providers with metasearch were: loss of control over search results (53%), loss of branding (53%), digital rights management (47%), customer support problems (42%), excessive use of system resources (37%), and the amount of communications required with other suppliers (21%).

The survey results were used by all three Task Groups in further refining their work plans and in developing use cases.

## Next Steps

With a mix of librarians, software providers, and content providers, the three task groups have drawn the participation of over 60 individuals from five countries. (See the sidebar for the list of **Metasearch Initiative** participants and their organizations.) Each group's first set of deliverables and recommendations was presented at NISO's fall workshop in September 2005.

Part 2 of this article, which will appear in an upcoming issue of *Against the Grain*, will report on the **NISO Metasearch Initiative** task groups' initial set of findings and recommendations. Official documents are posted on the **NISO Metasearch Initiative** Webpage ([http://www.niso.org/committees/MS\\_initiative.html](http://www.niso.org/committees/MS_initiative.html)). Committee activities can be followed at the task groups' **WIKI** (<http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/niso-mi/>). 

## Technology Left Behind — What in the WorldCat is OCLC up to?

Column Editor: **Cris Ferguson** (Electronic Resources/Serials Librarian, James B. Duke Library, Furman University, 3300 Poinsett Highway, Greenville, SC 29613; Phone: 864-294-2713) <[cris.ferguson@furman.edu](mailto:cris.ferguson@furman.edu)>

In October 2003, OCLC launched the pilot of the **Open WorldCat** program, an initiative which "makes records of library-owned materials in OCLC's WorldCat database available to Web users on popular Internet search, bibliographic and bookselling sites." (<http://www.oclc.org/worldcat/open/default.htm>) The program has been expanding ever since, leaving the pilot phase in October 2004.

Since making **Open WorldCat** a permanent program at the end of 2004, OCLC has continued to develop and to enhance the functionality of the program. On January 3, 2006, OCLC announced the acquisition of the assets of **Openly Informatics**, opening the door for even further expansion of services. This column will investigate how **Open WorldCat** works, recent developments in the program, and future directions for growth, touching on the recent acquisition of **Openly Informatics**.

### Open WorldCat Partnerships

The goal of the **Open WorldCat** program is to make OCLC member libraries more visible on the Web and their collections more accessible to Web users. As part of this effort, OCLC has established linking partnerships with several vendors, including search engines, book vendors, and fulfillment services. Through the partnerships, **Open WorldCat** allows these vendors access to "millions of abridged WorldCat records."

Both **Google** and **Yahoo! Search** are partnering with OCLC to deliver links to **WorldCat** records. According to **Chip Nilges**, Vice President, OCLC New Product Planning,

"**Yahoo! Search** and **Google** are exposing a 3.4 million record set through their interfaces, including the 3 million most widely owned items in **WorldCat**," representing 78 percent of the holdings in the **WorldCat** database.

### How Open WorldCat Works

To find items held by a local library, a user conducting a search in **Google** or **Yahoo! Search** enters a search phrase that matches the title of the desired item and the phrase "find in a library." At this time, the "find in a library" search online searches the title field of a record. It will not search for an author or subject. When the results of a search are displayed, links to **Open WorldCat** records are marked by the phrase "Find in a Library."

Clicking on the "Find in a Library" link in the search results takes the user into the **Open WorldCat** record for the desired item. Once in the **Open WorldCat** record, the user has the option to enter his or her zip code to determine if a local library owns the item. If the book is available at a local library, the record provides a link to the library's hours, if available, and also a link to the online catalog, letting the user check to see if the book is checked in and available.



An example of how this entire process looks to the user can be found on the **Open WorldCat** Web page <http://www.oclc.org/worldcat/open/how/default.htm>.

While in the pilot phase, **Open WorldCat** was open to participation by all libraries with holdings in **WorldCat**. As an official program, participation has been limited to those libraries that subscribe to **WorldCat** on the **FirstSearch** platform. As **Nilges** points out, "The program requires resources to keep running (and improving). We have added it as one of the many features an institution receives as a subscriber to **WorldCat** on **FirstSearch**, and, by participating, institutions help us put more resources into the project to encourage further innovations and features." Those libraries that do not subscribe to **WorldCat** on **FirstSearch** will not be able to open their holdings up to users via **Open WorldCat**.

### Toolbars

The primary disadvantage to using the "find in a library" method to search for and to access **Open WorldCat** records is that the user has to know to add the "find in a library" phrase to the search string. To make accessing **Open WorldCat** a little more user friendly, OCLC has worked with its partners to create Web-based search tools, including a special OCLC edition of the **Yahoo! Search** toolbar. The **Yahoo! Search** toolbar, while still equipped with other popular features like **Anti-Spy** and **Pop Up Blocker**, also includes a feature that allows users to search for terms in **Open WorldCat**. Instructions for downloading and using the

*continued on page 83*



OCLC version of the **Yahoo! Search** toolbar can be found at: <http://www.oclc.org/toolbar/default.htm>.

**Google** has also enabled its toolbar to link to **Open WorldCat** records. In the latest version of the **Google** toolbar, the AutoLink feature will recognize ISBN's on a Web page. "When ISBNs are found, the AutoLink button on the Toolbar is retitled Show Book Info. Clicking the button highlights ISBNs on the page and converts them to hyperlinks to **Open WorldCat** information for each represented item." (<http://www.oclc.org/worldcat/open/searchtools/default.htm>)

These toolbars are available for both **Internet Explorer** and **Firefox**.

### Pilot Projects

Since making **Open WorldCat** a permanent program, **OCLC** has developed several pilot projects to further enhance the functionality of the program.

### Reference Services

**OCLC** found that a fair number of reference questions were coming through the **Open WorldCat** feedback form, and, as a result, the company implemented a pilot program to provide virtual reference services to **Open WorldCat** users, allowing users to "submit questions electronically to the online reference services of **OCLC** member libraries." (<http://www.oclc.org/worldcat/open/reference/default.htm>) Currently, those libraries operating on **OCLC's QuestionPoint** platform and almost 150 other libraries also operating virtual reference desks on other platforms are providing the virtual reference service. **Nilges** emphasized that those libraries that do not wish to receive questions from the Internet-at-large are certainly allowed to opt out of participating, but thus far most have chosen to participate.

### User-Contributed Content

Available since October 2005, the user-contributed content pilot enables librarians, library patrons, and other **WorldCat** users to associate evaluative content, like reviews and ratings, to a **WorldCat** record. Users wishing to contribute a review must set up a personal account, and, like the entries in **Wikipedia**, all content is editable by all users. It is important to note that the user-contributed to content is only associated with a record; "it does not become a part of the record's authoritative bibliographic in-

### For More Information

**OCLC**. "OCLC acquires the assets of Openly Informatics." News release. January 3, 2006. <http://www.oclc.org/news/releases/200601.htm>.

**Quint, Barbara**. "OCLC Expands Linking Resources with Acquisition of Openly Informatics." *News Breaks and the Weekly News Digest*. January 9, 2006. <http://www.infotoday.com/newsbreaks/nb060109-1.shtml>

**Fretwell-Downing**. <http://www.fdisolutions.com/>

**OCLC PICA**. <http://oclc.pica.org/>

**Online purchasing pilot**. <http://www.oclc.org/worldcat/open/store/default.htm>

**Open WorldCat**. <http://www.oclc.org/worldcat/open/default.htm>

**Openly Informatics**. <http://www.openly.com/>

**Reference Services pilot**. <http://www.oclc.org/worldcat/open/reference/default.htm>

**User-contributed content pilot**. <http://www.oclc.org/worldcat/open/usercontent/default.htm>

formation." (<http://www.oclc.org/worldcat/open/usercontent/default.htm>) Participation has been relatively slow up to this point, but **Nilges** notes that the user-contributed content feature is expected to be added to the **WorldCat** database in **FirstSearch** in April 2006 and use of this new functionality is expected to gain in momentum.

### Online Purchasing

The online purchasing pilot gives **Open WorldCat** users the option to purchase books from either **Baker & Taylor** (<http://www.btol.com/>) or **Amazon** (<http://www.amazon.com/>) using a "Buy It Now" link in the **Open WorldCat** record for that item. As an added benefit to libraries, **OCLC** has set up a process for revenue sharing with libraries. "Each time a book is purchased through the "Buy It Now" **Baker & Taylor** store, a portion of the proceeds is shared with **Open WorldCat** libraries through credits on their **OCLC** invoices." (<http://www.oclc.org/worldcat/open/store/default.htm>) **Nilges** indicated that in the coming months, **OCLC** plans to expand this feature to include additional vendors.

In the near future, both the user-contributed content pilot and the reference services pilot are expected to move out of the pilot phase, becoming a full part of the **Open WorldCat** program.

### Acquisition of Openly Informatics

The most recent development at **OCLC**, announced January 3, 2006, is the acquisition of the assets of **Openly Informatics**. "The key reason for this acquisition is in the metadata. **Openly Informatics** has developed a knowledgebase of 1.2 million records with links to electronic resources that will be used to enrich **WorldCat**," says **Mike Teets**, Vice President, **OCLC** Global Product Architecture.

**Teets** went on to say, "These records will enhance core **WorldCat**-based applications, including **Open WorldCat**. Between these records and the registry of **OpenURL** resolvers, Internet users will have broader access to


the licensed electronic collections of libraries through the **Open WorldCat** program."

**Openly Informatics** will also benefit from this new partnership, expanding its knowledgebase coverage to include electronic resources other than journal materials, such as eBooks and electronic theses and dissertations.

**Teets** indicated that the reaction of existing **OCLC** and **Openly Informatics** customers has been favorable. "We're confident that as we move forward with our collaborative efforts, users will view this acquisition as a positive development for us all."

**OCLC PICA**, the European library cooperative, also made a recent acquisition, purchasing **Fretwell-Downing Informatics**. **Fretwell-Downing** relies on the **Openly Informatics** knowledgebase for providing services, such as **OpenURL** linking, to its library customers. As **Teets** points out, the acquisition of **Openly Informatics** "ensures that **Fretwell-Downing** will continue to offer a high level of services based upon **Openly's** expanding knowledge base."

### Where Open WorldCat is Heading

**OCLC** has big plans for **Open WorldCat**, with several areas of expansion planned. Up to this point, **Open WorldCat** has relied on partners, like **Google** and **Yahoo! Search**, to provide a search form for Web users. According to **Nilges**, in the coming months **OCLC** plans to release a **WorldCat** search page from which users can launch their own search. **Nilges** went on to say, "Later this year and into 2007, we plan to incorporate some of the many innovations from our **OCLC** Office of Research in to **Open WorldCat**, including **FictionFinder**, **DeweyBrowser**, **FAST** and **Audience Level**." (For more information on these new developments see <http://www.oclc.org/research/researchworks/default.htm>.) All of the recent and upcoming developments in **Open WorldCat** promise to increase library visibility on the Internet, offering new opportunities for libraries and their users. 

### OCLC Contact Information

**Bob Murphy**  
**OCLC Communications**  
6565 Frantz Road  
Dublin, Ohio 43017  
(614) 761-5136  
<[murphyb@oclc.org](mailto:murphyb@oclc.org)>  
<http://www.oclc.org>